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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 20th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 2 July 1993, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. HUSLID (Norway)

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(a) Coordination of humanitarian assistance: emergency relief and the continuum to rehabilitation and development (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

COORDINATION OF THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING THEMES:

(a) COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE: EMERGENCY RELIEF AND THE CONTINUUM TO REHABILITATION AND DEVELOPMENT (agenda item 2) (continued) (E/1993/90, E/1993/NGO/4)

Mr. BAHADIAN (Brazil) said that in his opinion the deliberations of the Council would have been more productive if the report presented (E/1993/90) had given a more detailed diagnosis of the problems encountered in coordinating humanitarian activities since the adoption of resolution 46/182, and if the specialized agencies, with their direct experience in the field, had made their difficulties known.

Perhaps the most important provision of resolution 46/182 was the one stating that humanitarian assistance must be in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality, and those principles called for some brief comments.

It was never superfluous to recall that United Nations activities in the territory of a member State, whether in the form of humanitarian assistance or development cooperation, were undertaken only with the consent and under the coordinating responsibility of the recipient Government. The events of recent months had emphasized the importance of preserving the strict neutrality and non-political character of humanitarian activities. It was, therefore, with reservation that his delegation had taken note of some proposals that might involve departing from those imperatives. It had been suggested that the political, security and humanitarian aspects of United Nations activities should be more closely integrated. While it was true that, in many cases, humanitarian efforts were undertaken in situations where the United Nations was also engaged in peace-keeping, the "vertical coordination" of those two aspects would jeopardize the independence and neutrality of humanitarian assistance.

From a more general viewpoint, he was not convinced of the advisability of excessive proximity between those dealing with social and humanitarian issues, as the Council did, and those dealing with political and security matters, in particular the Security Council. As specified by the Charter, the Economic and Social Council was basically linked to the General Assembly, and it was within

that context that its activities might have some bearing on the political and security issues that formed an important part of the General Assembly's agenda. It was in that spirit that his delegation had taken note of the proposal to hold joint meetings of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, but it wondered whether that type of proposal should not, logically and chronologically, be discussed only after a more balanced relationship had been established between the Security Council and the General Assembly itself, a task which still lay ahead.

The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs had suggested, that, in order to improve the efficiency of the assistance provided, emergency response teams should be deployed in cases where the United Nations lacked response capacity in the field. It would be useful if the Council were given further clarification on the implications of the proposal. The field capacity of the United Nations was geared to the regular programmes of cooperation and not to potential emergencies. The emergency response teams might, therefore, become the rule rather than an exception. What would the relationship then be between them and the field representatives of agencies? Would not a rapid deployment of additional personnel under existing arrangements be preferable? Would not the enhancement of information management systems be more efficient in the long run? Was there not a risk that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs would increasingly undertake operational functions?

The comparative advantage enjoyed by the Department in coordinating and providing leadership for emergency action might be lost if it became involved in the implementation of certain phases of humanitarian assistance programmes, such as utilizing resources from the Central Emergency Revolving Fund to finance special missions, needs assessment, preparations for appeals and the strengthening of coordination mechanisms - apart from the fact that such involvement would not be consistent with the revolving nature of the Fund. Perhaps it would be more appropriate to leave deliberations on such financial arrangements to the comprehensive review to be undertaken at the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly on the basis of more detailed reports.

His delegation attached great importance to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and fully supported the Secretary-General's recommendation that greater

use should be made of it. It also believed that improvements in emergency information management were crucial to the effectiveness of the system. It noted the progress so far achieved and looked forward to the presentation of a more comprehensive report at the forthcoming session of the General Assembly.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Observer for Egypt) said that, in spite of the large number of ethnic and political conflicts, natural disasters most often provided the occasion for the international community to show solidarity. The Secretary-General reported that 162,000 people had died in 1991 in the course of 434 serious natural disasters, which had caused $44 billion worth of damage.

The United Nations system had adopted constructive measures to strengthen coordination and cooperation among its constituent bodies and institutions, in accordance with the wishes of the General Assembly expressed in resolution 46/182.

His delegation fully supported the view of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs that the aim should be to establish a closer connection with events on the ground and to ensure coordination of the activities of the bodies concretely engaged in delivering aid. For that reason the Department of Humanitarian Affairs should have its headquarters in Geneva, as close as possible to the agencies and bodies responding to emergencies. The arguments for establishing the Department in New York were not convincing: the Geneva location would not prevent the Department from maintaining contact with UNDP and the Security Council in cases where its activities were integrated into peace-keeping operations.

The Department had been entrusted with the difficult task of increasing the volume of assistance and rationalizing the use of resources by avoiding overlapping and by assessing real needs. If it succeeded in that task, resources would be better utilized and the United Nations response would be correspondingly more effective in emergency situations.

The volume of aid available should in any case be increased. His Government appealed to donor countries to increase their contributions to the Central Emergency Revolving Fund to enable it to respond immediately to emergency situations.

Care should also be taken to ensure that humanitarian assistance programmes were recognized and supported during the process of adapting institutional machinery to sustainable development. Local organizations should be helped by giving them the resources needed to perform their tasks. In the preventive diplomacy framework, more attention should be paid to the potential of developing countries by making available to them the necessary resources and by improving information transfers.

His delegation considered that the integration of the humanitarian aspect into peace-making and peace-keeping activities should be limited to situations involving conflicts that fell within the jurisdiction of the Security Council, which were few in number compared with natural disasters. The latter had nothing to do with peace-making and were not within the competence of the Security Council, as his delegation had pointed out when resolution 46/182 was adopted.

Humanitarian assistance must have the sole aim of helping the populations concerned and coordinating the recovery of the affected countries. On all those planes, it must remain neutral and non-political, and it must concentrate on the three major aspects identified for social development: the redistribution of resources, social integration, and protection of vulnerable sections of the population.

Mr. LANG (Austria) recalled that, already before 1991, the United Nations had developed a mechanism for responding to natural disasters, which must not be forgotten and indeed should continue to be appropriately used by the international community. Particularly important in the continuum to rehabilitation and development were aspects pertaining to disaster prevention and mitigation.

It was clear that in the area of complex emergencies leadership for coordination required more attention. The Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs must, therefore, be given the means intended by resolution 46/182 both within the Secretariat and the rest of the United Nations system. Their role had not yet been sufficiently recognized.

The fact that demands upon the international community for emergency assistance had reached unprecedented levels, and that capacities for meeting them

were overstretched and available resources limited, made it necessary to set priorities. It also called for a coordinated effort to strengthen links between operational agencies and existing partners and to seek new ones. What was needed was a lean Secretariat, which must maximize the use of experienced staff both within and from outside the United Nations system.

His delegation had been encouraged by the results achieved by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and its Working Group, and it had noted the potential for increased efficiency, as well as the open questions regarding the "lead agency" concept and additional layers of decision-making.

As to the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, his delegation could support changes to its rules to allow access to intergovernmental organizations outside the United Nations system, provided that their activities did not fall within the responsibility of United Nations operational agencies, and that there were appropriate safeguards for the replenishment of the Fund.

Natural disasters must remain at the centre of attention of the international community. The consequences of underdevelopment were particularly evident when natural disasters occurred, and the prevention and mitigation of their effects must be an integral part of any development strategy. His delegation, therefore, welcomed the efforts of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to enhance United Nations capacity to meet the prevention and preparedness requirements of developing countries.

Emergency relief assistance and long-term development needed to be mutually reinforcing. The United Nations system had not so far acquired much experience in how to achieve that objective in practice. Patience might be needed as results might not be immediate. Nevertheless, it was important to grapple with the problem and not to shy away from its complexity.

Mr. YAKER (Economic Commission for Africa) said that ethnic, tribal and clan conflicts, civil war and natural disasters were afflicting Africa, where they had recently assumed unprecedented proportions. Those who suffered most were always the poorest and most vulnerable - children, mothers, the elderly and the disabled.

In many countries, such conflicts were aggravated by the arrival of thousands of refugees, as for example those from Somalia in Ethiopia and Kenya, from Angola and Mozambique in Malawi, and from Liberia and Southern Togo in neighbouring West African countries. At the same time, the African countries were attempting to rehabilitate and develop their economies. That kind of situation made it even more imperative and urgent to adopt an integrated and comprehensive approach to emergency aid, rehabilitation and development. It was evident that emergency situations in Africa arose precisely because of underdevelopment, and the failure both of Africa and the international community to create the necessary conditions for sustained development.

The regional commissions of the United Nations were well placed to play an important role in such a coordinated and integrated approach, not only because of their proximity to their member States but also because of the very nature of their activities. The Secretary-General had expressed his intention to strengthen the commissions, and to decentralize certain activities in order to improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of United Nations action.

Everything pointed to the lack of a general framework for coordination: between sectors, between donors, between NGOs and Governments. Even priorities were not linked with the needs of the communities concerned. In those conditions, countries might eventually be unable to sustain their development. It was accordingly essential that humanitarian assistance should fit into a macroeconomic framework.

The Economic Commission for Africa had an obvious advantage among African organizations for coordinating the components of the Secretary-General's Agenda for Peace dealing with post-conflict peace-building. As a result of its cooperation with regional organizations it was well-placed to collect data pointing to potential emergency situations and to take measures to provide humanitarian aid, as well as to undertake rehabilitation operations and to meet reconstruction requirements. Its proximity to the hotbeds of tension and its capacity to identify rapidly the concrete action to be taken and to offer technical assistance upon request also gave it exceptional potential.

Some emergency situations could be foreseen before they degenerated into crises. Three examples were: Somalia, where the food shortage of 1985 had been

a harbinger of the war that was to ravage the country; Zimbabwe and Zambia, indeed the entire southern African subregion, where drought had brought the Governments concerned to the brink of collapse; and the many African countries where the uncertainties surrounding the democratic process gave indication of possible future conflicts.

In order to accomplish its task, the Economic Commission for Africa must be in a position to promote policy coherence and programme coordination in the provision of emergency relief and follow-up action of a humanitarian, economic and social nature. The Inter-Agency Task Force responsible for the New Agenda for the Development of Africa was the appropriate coordinating body. The Commission's report entitled Agenda on Emergency Humanitarian Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Affairs in Africa mapped out the Committee's agenda for meeting the challenges of African emergencies in the 1990s and beyond. Copies of the report had been distributed informally to members of the Council.

Turning to examples of coordination carried out by the Commission, he said that, although the situation in Somalia still had a long way to go before it could be considered normal, the Commission had begun to prepare a master plan for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the country in coordination with the United Nations sponsored 1993 programme for Somalia, the UNDP Bureau for the Arab States, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, and United Nations Operations in Somalia (UNOSOM). At the request of the Ethiopian transitional Government, it was also drawing up a master plan for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the Tigre region, which was to serve as a test case for other regions of the country. It had been drafted in close cooperation with the UNDP Bureau in Addis Ababa, and in collaboration with other United Nations specialized agencies.

In Mozambique, where the situation called for immediate measures for reconstruction and rehabilitation of the productive and social sectors, the Commission was actively participating in meetings on the humanitarian assistance programme. At the request of Angola and Eritrea, it was cooperating in the elaboration of master plans for the two countries in close coordination with the Department of Humanitarian assistance and the UNDP regional offices.

In conjunction with the Pan-African Centre for Social Action, the Commission had approached the Organization of African Unity, the African Development Bank

and various African inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations in order to promote an "African humanitarian initiative" that would benefit peoples affected by civil strife and famine. The highly positive reaction had encouraged the Commission to propose the convening of a colloquium in Ouagadougou from 18 to 20 March 1993 to work out an action plan for a network and structure to express African solidarity. The Final Act of the colloquium had been presented to the OUA Summit in Cairo in June 1993, where it had been welcomed.

In the final analysis, emergencies would not disappear unless their root causes were tackled: underdevelopment, inequities and social and economic injustice. Africa, and the developing countries in general, must be given support to enable them to join the world community as equal partners in building a common future.

Mr. NOMGBE (Benin) said that, since Mr. Eliasson had been appointed Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator in March 1992, something seemed to have changed. While there was still much to be done, the varied and complex activities undertaken in the humanitarian field had been better coordinated. It was, however, still too early for the noble ideas of General Assembly resolution 46/182 to be given practical expression on the ground, in areas of conflict and camps for refugees and displaced persons. He wished to emphasize the importance of the leadership role of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in coordination matters. Due to sound preparation and combined effort, humanitarian assistance had prevented the serious drought rife in southern Africa from resulting in a disastrous famine. That was a remarkable achievement and an example of what coordination should be: it had to be applied not only at the top but on the ground, in carrying out the practical tasks. As the Secretary-General had said, responsibility for implementation should be entrusted primarily to the most appropriate organization or body, with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs ensuring coordination. For their part, resident coordinators had a dynamic role to play in emergency management. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee should also be an effective instrument of coordination in working out strategies and seeking appropriate concerted responses to emergency situations.

It was obvious that the best coordination would be fruitless if the necessary financing was not forthcoming, and his delegation welcomed the establishment of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund. It was important that heads of United Nations organizations and bodies should provide information on the arrangements made by them to build up reserves in order to strengthen their operational capacity to respond rapidly and in a coordinated way in the event of an emergency. His delegation, accordingly, supported the proposal to recommend to the General Assembly all adjustments necessitated by the increase in the number of emergency situations.

The consolidated appeals, of which 20 had been already launched over a period of 18 months for a total of $6 billion, were an important instrument in humanitarian assistance and should be reserved for emergencies genuinely requiring coordinated action by the system as a whole.

The continuum from assistance to rehabilitation and development was of crucial importance and emergency aid must be provided in such a way as to promote long-term rehabilitation and development. He would personally prefer to replace the latter phrase by "sustainable development", which was more vivid and more in line with the current situation. The situation of the beneficiaries of emergency assistance would continue to be precarious unless they were provided with more lasting aid. That was an indication of the importance of ensuring that the rehabilitation phase should make it possible to restore damaged infrastructures and enable them to meet future emergencies more successfully. By their very nature, assistance and rehabilitation operations should address the underlying causes of the emergencies, which were undoubtedly many and complex, but in a field where the survival of mankind was at stake, every challenge must be met. He welcomed the statements of former speakers, including the representatives of Canada, UNDP, FAO, and the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, who had emphasized the need for a long-term view of the problems. Sustainable development must remain the primary target.

Mr. CHIRILA (Romania) welcomed the expanding role of the United Nations in providing humanitarian assistance. That was one of its major responsibilities in consequence of the problems connected with the ending of the

cold war, the unabated growth of the world's population, the deterioration of the environment, and the state of the world economy. Romania subscribed to the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality which should govern those activities, and also attached great importance to respect for the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and the national unity of States.

At the time when resolution 46/182 had been adopted, the magnitude and complexity of the task to be accomplished had not been fully apparent, nor had the interrelationship between the political, security and humanitarian aspects of emergency situations been realized. Subsequently, events had repeatedly confirmed the need for a coherent and coordination response to such emergencies by the system, including advanced planning and streamlined cooperation with the relevant partners. Greater flexibility was required to enable the United Nations system to respond more rapidly at the early stages of emergencies, to provide early warning information, to build reliable field-level arrangements and to cope with situations in countries where there was no United Nations emergency response capacity.

The operation of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund had highlighted the need to make adjustment to take into account the current number of emergencies. The consolidated appeals should include the activities of NGOs and bilateral programmes. Some countries, including Romania, acted with less publicity in mobilizing resources through official or private channels, but their contributions to humanitarian assistance, especially when crises or disasters affected neighbouring countries, also expressed a commitment to human solidarity. The continuum from relief to rehabilitation and development must be maintained as laid down in resolution 46/182. Emergency measures should be seen as a step towards long-term development, and the rehabilitation phase should provide an opportunity to improve infrastructures, facilities and services destroyed in the disaster.

His Government hoped that the Council would succeed in drafting agreed conclusions on the coordination of humanitarian assistance in order to strengthen the actions of member States, of the United Nations and of their implementing partners.

Mr. GOUDYMA (Observer for Ukraine) agreed with Mr. Eliasson that it was essential to establish closer coordination between the United Nations, member States and NGOs. The Emergency Relief Coordinator carried very heavy responsibilities, and, in order to perform his duties, he would have to have sufficient resources at his disposal, and sufficient highly qualified staff; he should also be able to draw upon the services of other bodies. The ponderousness of United Nations machinery, which had been mentioned by the Secretary-General during his recent visit to Ukraine, might impede a rapid response to emergencies. It might, therefore, be advisable to give the Coordinator wider powers than were usually available to heads of department.

The security and juridical protection of United Nations personnel engaged in humanitarian assistance and peace-keeping operations must also be assured. Perhaps a legal instrument should be adopted to establish the status of personnel and provide for the necessary protection mechanisms at every stage of operations.

As the Secretary-General had pointed out, emergency assistance must make an effective contribution to the long-term rehabilitation and development of the recipient country, and, in that context, he recalled that a few years previously Ukraine had suffered the terrible Chernobyl disaster. It might have receded into the past as far as the international community was concerned, but, as Ukraine saw it, only international aid would make it possible to overcome the tragic consequences. He recalled, in that connection, that Mr. Eliasson was United Nations coordinator for international cooperation on behalf of Chernobyl.

The Emergency Relief Coordinator should be able to draw on a network of local offices. Ukraine and other countries of the former Soviet Union had established centres for coordination with the United Nations and UNDP. The centres might be given responsibility for on-the-ground coordination in supplying aid, in predicting crisis risks and in reporting thereon. Again with a view to efficiency, provision should be made for the more active participation of non-governmental organizations, financial institutions and private capital in humanitarian assistance operations. Continuing links should be established with national emergency assistance coordination bodies, and Ukraine had established a body of that type under the direction of the Deputy Prime Minister. Monitoring

of operations was also necessary in order to avoid waste and overlapping, and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs should have a branch responsible for monitoring and auditing accounts.

Mr. AITKEN (World Health Organization) said that four central coordination and human assistance mechanisms had been established: the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, and the consolidated appeals procedure. At the country, and sometimes regional, level coordination centred round the Special Representative or, more commonly, the Resident Coordinator. Finally, cooperation was carried out on bilateral, or even trilateral basis, between specific programmes or agencies when less complex emergencies were involved. He wished to present WHO's views on the operations of those mechanisms.

The Department of Humanitarian Affairs had an essential role to play and was fully supported by WHO, which considered that the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs should contribute to all discussions of peace building or peace maintenance. Humanitarian questions should not, however, be used as means of exerting pressure. WHO attached great importance to the principle of neutrality.

WHO had benefited from donations under the consolidated appeals procedure. The follow-up could be improved: both institutions and donors should be given an opportunity from time to time to assess progress. If any appeal was not entirely met, the non-food sector should still receive a proportionate share in the resources raised.

WHO had received resources from the Central Emergency Revolving Fund for both Somalia and the countries of the former Yugoslavia. It was desirable that donors should indicate as early as possible that contributions would be paid, even if actual payment would take some time. Undertakings of that sort would enable WHO to obtain corresponding resources from the Fund.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee was working satisfactorily, but it was important to maintain the overall coordination functions of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC).

At the country level, the information and early warning procedures were beginning to work. He drew attention to the important contribution of technical

assessment missions prior to launching of the appeal. At a stage when an emergency situation had not been officially announced, it was important to send a technical assessment mission, the financing of which often proved difficult and should be provided from a central source.

Once operations had begun, all organizations were dependent on personnel working at the country level. Their selection and training were, therefore, of crucial importance, and a standard training manual should be used by all organizations. It was also indispensable to strengthen national capacities. The transfer of skills and prior planning were of central concern to WHO. It was particularly important to assure the continuum from emergency aid to development, but, as the representative of Austria had pointed out, the techniques available for that purpose were not very sophisticated. Neither Governments, nor institutions possessed the internal coordination mechanisms to ensure such a continuum. That aspect should be borne in mind in the context of the consolidated appeals.

He recalled that the WHO Assembly had adopted earlier in the year a resolution deploring systematic breaches of medical ethics and calling upon all parties to armed conflicts to respect and apply the rules of international humanitarian law for the protection of the sick and wounded, and medical, nursing and other health personnel, and to respect provisions governing the use of Red Cross and Red Crescent markings. It had also urged parties to armed conflicts to refrain from all acts preventing or impeding the provision of medical assistance and services. Measures must be taken to ensure that that message was heeded.

Mr. KHOURY (Syrian Arab Republic) said that General Assembly resolution 46/182 defined the mandate of all organs and agencies of the United Nations system engaged in humanitarian assistance. The guiding principles were those of neutrality and respect for the territorial integrity of the recipient country; furthermore the consent of the recipient country was essential. However, in his report, the Secretary-General gave information which appeared to run counter to those principles and which should therefore be studied carefully. It might be appropriate to strengthen the machinery introduced only a

year ago. However the basic resolution should continue to be applied and the Secretary-General should ensure supervision of the machinery.

Like the Egyptian delegation, the Syrian Arab Republic would like to have information about the advantages accruing from the transfer of all the services of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to Geneva in order to bring them closer to most of the theatres of operations.

Mr. EL KARIB (Observer for Sudan) said that, in humanitarian affairs, Sudan cooperated closely with the United Nations system and NGOs under agreements to permit access to populations caught up in the civil war in the south of the country. That rescue operation had proved a success and set an example for many countries in similar situations.

His Government, accordingly, welcomed the appointment of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator and the establishment of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. It was, however, not convinced that the new Under-Secretary-General should be asked to ensure that the humanitarian dimension was integrated in peace-making and peace-keeping activities and that humanitarian assistance was provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality, which were the guiding principles of General Assembly resolution 46/182. Sudan was not at all convinced that the decision-making organs of the United Nations fully respected those principles or that the major Powers always made a distinction between national interest and respect for neutrality. On the contrary, they were cynically inclined to apply two different standards.

The new Emergency Relief Coordinator was also responsible for ensuring that emergency assistance was provided in ways that were supportive of rehabilitation and longer-term development so as to reduce dependency on emergency aid. According to the Secretary-General's report, however, the transition from relief to development had been impeded by the acute nature of the crises often involving the breakdown of authority and the absence of viable national and local structures, ethnic tensions, abuse of human rights, continuing political instability and generally unfavourable economic conditions. Although some of those impediments might be real, it sometimes

happened that donor countries did not honour their pledges, that they tried to impose unacceptable conditions on recipient countries, and that they withheld aid as a measure of retribution or a means of political pressure. Sudan had already had occasion to point out to relief organizations and donor countries that the major obstacle to the distribution of relief supplies in the country lay in the transport sector which lacked the necessary spare parts. A major European country, which should, under an agreement with Sudan, have supplied spare parts for the railways, had cut off delivery as a sanction at a time when it was imperative to deliver assistance to populations in need. Such examples were legion in operations conducted by international organizations, NGOs and donor countries.

The proposals for country-level coordination seemed to be based on the model of a complete breakdown in the government machinery, i.e. the situation prevailing at present in Somalia. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General would assume overall responsibility for political, military and humanitarian questions. In the case of operational affairs, the in-country coordinator for humanitarian affairs would communicate directly with the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs in New York. In those circumstances, the question that arose was how relief operations would be carried out, in the absence of acceptable guidelines and coordination with central and local authorities. The difficulties encountered on the ground were often explained by the fact that institutions of the United Nations system distanced themselves from the local authorities and aligned themselves with the political representatives of donor countries or cooperated too closely with NGOs whose relations with local authorities were strained: mutual distrust eventually impeded the delivery of assistance, by a real or imaginary infringement of the sovereignty of the country concerned and by damaging its relations with the United Nations. The Council should look more closely into that aspect of the question.

The establishment of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund was a welcome development. However, the ceiling assigned to it might be insufficient: it should be raised to $100 million and the scope of its activities should be broadened to cover the transport sector. His delegation urged the Council to draw

upon such organizations as the International Organization for Migration as well. With regard to the proposals concerning consolidated appeals, economic difficulty in donor countries should not be used as an excuse for withholding resources from programmes devised to deal with the increasing number of emergency situations.

Proposals for ensuring a smooth transition from emergency assistance to recovery and long-term development were welcome, but could only be applied if conditionality and selectivity were reduced to a minimum, if national institutions were closely consulted at each phase, and if the area allocated to the NGOs was supervised by the national authorities and the United Nations system.

Mr. WEBER (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) drew attention to a statement submitted by the International Federation on natural disasters, vulnerability and human rights, which had been circulated as document E/1993/NGO/4. It echoed both the concerns of delegations that wished to see the United Nations develop an early-warning system, and the views expressed during the high-level segment discussions of the World Summit for Social Development, when the subject of exclusion and marginalization had often been mentioned.

The International Federation supported the procedure set forth in resolution 46/182 and was collaborating closely with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. It saw the resources it had allocated to that cooperation as an investment for which there should be some tangible returns, in terms of help to greater numbers of people and the improvement in its own international relief operations.

The Secretary-General placed great emphasis in his report on the coordinating tasks of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in emergency situations, but had made little reference to the need for the Department to take control of humanitarian operations, which might on occasion lead to conflict with other parts of the United Nations system, notably the Security Council. The Secretary-General had made virtually no reference to the need for increased disaster preparedness at the local and national levels. That was a serious

admission which was indicative of a tendency to concentrate upon the organization of post-disaster relief, which in the opinion of the Federation, was inadequate.

The necessity of negotiating means of access to populations in need of assistance would undoubtedly assume increasing importance in the future, and that was also a question which was scarcely mentioned in the report. The Federation would like to receive clarification in that regard from the Department.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee had still not achieved its full potential: the Department should accordingly demonstrate its capabilities for enterprise and leadership.

It would be helpful if details were given of how the consolidated appeals would be launched and utilized, otherwise they might soon become no more than "wish-lists". It would be as well to know what steps were envisaged to strengthen links with the Bretton Woods institutions.

The Department reported that it had no ready access to information that would be useful to emergency assistance managers and decision makers. The Federation wished to point out that it published the World Disasters Report, which might prove of use. However, it supported the development of the International Emergency Readiness and Response Information System, a DHA initiative, which should allow all participants in a particular operation to have access to each other's databases.

The Secretary-General and some delegations recognized that measures should be taken to limit the damage caused by millions of land-mines laid in conflict zones. Not only mines but all military ordinance had to be cleared from those areas so that use of the land could be restored to the local people. In the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, efforts to that end were being intensified, following the example of the International Committee of the Red Cross, which had recently held a symposium on the subject.

Several delegations had pleaded for greater disaster prevention and disaster preparedness, and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs had asked Governments to take more responsibility for responding to emergency situations; that would require more effort in respect of prevention and preparedness. In that context, the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies and their Federation formed a network whose potential was not fully exploited, and which did not

understand why its funding was so difficult, particularly with regard to natural disaster preparedness programmes. The Federation had extensive field experience and would like to be closely associated with activities of the United Nations system for the prevention of disasters and assistance to victims.

Mr. de WARLINGCOURT (International Council of Voluntary Agencies) stressed that it was important for NGOs that a United Nations central agency should coordinate emergency responses. He thought it desirable that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs should assume overall coordination functions in complex situations, with direct lines of communication to the Secretary-General, as soon as the need was felt. For "straightforward" situations a lead agency could continue to be designated on a flexible, pragmatic basis. But in the absence of an organization in the United Nations system mandated to lead operations in all circumstances, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees should assume that role.

NGOs wanted to be involved in preventive planning and emergency response activities at the outset of a crisis, since only by involving all concerned parties would it be possible to provide adequate and rapid relief and plan the basis for future reconstruction, in recognition of the need to ensure a relief-development continuum. Moreover, NGOs believed that their participation in all aspects of planning could improve service delivery from one crisis to another, and ensure their full commitment to durable solutions in whose choice they had participated under the guidance of the United Nations Coordinator. The International Council had demonstrated its commitment to the humanitarian coordination effort of the United Nations by seconding a senior staff member to the Department.

It was regrettable that budgetary restrictions were preventing the Department from disposing of experts with emergency relief experience in the field. It was also unfortunate that the Department's secretariat was divided between New York and Geneva, particularly in view of the importance of avoiding overlapping of relief activities. Moreover, the often artificial distinction between entities dealing with natural and those dealing with man-made disasters

should be avoided as many elements of the humanitarian response were very similar in both cases.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee should not only endeavour to streamline the consolidated appeals procedure but should also take up the problems of security of staff involved in relief and de-mining operations. Attention should also be given to reinforcing skills in early warning, mitigation and disaster management. The training effort required was not

only incumbent upon the Department of Humanitarian Affairs but also upon staff in the countries affected, in particular in the third world.

Mr. ARELLANO (Mexico) said that, in the first year that the new Department of Humanitarian Affairs had been operating, in spite of the clear statement in General Assembly resolution 46/182 of the governing principles for humanitarian assistance - humanity, neutrality, and impartiality - those principles had been increasingly forgotten. It was difficult for his delegation to accept that humanitarian assistance decisions should be taken outside the General Assembly, of which the Department was an off-shoot. If the United Nations was to keep the respect and confidence of the international community, it was indispensable that its actions should be in line with the principles of the Charter and that humanitarian assistance should not be diverted from its proper purposes. It might also be necessary to define and classify the situations that warranted an appeal for humanitarian action on the part of the United Nations and to ensure that the same criteria were applied in similar situations. Who would, however, decide whether, when and how assistance should be provided?

His delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that the effectiveness of the response of the United Nations system to emergency situations depended primarily on the quality of local arrangements. The Emergency Relief Coordinator must, in accordance with resolution 46/182, assume full responsibility for the response and keep in permanent contact with field representatives. With regard to country-level coordination, a field in which the United Nations had vast experience, it was essential to specify very clearly that the humanitarian assistance authority within the United Nations system was the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, which must, for its part, consult the authorities of the

assisted country on a continuing basis. Even in cases where the Secretary-General had designated, in the event of complex emergencies, an envoy or a special representative, the Department must remain in control of the situation, since it would be delegating potentially very wide powers in the field. For that reason, the quality of the staff recruited for that type of work was of crucial importance.

The volume of resources of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund should also be considerably increased and the Fund should be managed by the Coordinator. It was for the General Assembly to decide on those new operational arrangements at its forthcoming session.

The structure of the Department also needed to be strengthened to enable it to assume responsibility for the management of natural disasters. The flow of refugees and displaced persons was one of the most common phenomena of the current situation. It was not adequately covered in the report, and his delegation would wish to be provided with more detailed information at the forthcoming session of the Assembly. It would also like to have more information about collaboration between the Department and the International Committee of the Red Cross and other international humanitarian organizations.

As far as the transition from assistance to rehabilitation and development was concerned, the United Nations should cooperate with non-governmental organizations.

The PRESIDENT invited members of the Council to address questions to the representatives of the agencies engaged in humanitarian assistance operations.

Mr. BOREL (International Committee of the Red Cross), replying to the Belgian representative, who had, at the preceding meeting, asked, on behalf of the European Community, how the International Committee assessed its participation in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, said that the International Committee had attended all meetings of the Standing Committee and almost all of its working group meetings on various countries. It had also participated in the meetings on displaced persons and on the early-warning system. The meetings had made it possible to exchange information on current and future activities but the International Committee was sometimes present on the ground before or at the same

time as the United Nations. The International Committee was, accordingly, in a position to describe the activities undertaken or planned, to provide information on the appeals that it had already made to its donors, and, where appropriate, make reference to its own appeal, without however including it, in the consolidated appeal of the United Nations. Such reunions also provided an opportunity for the International Committee to reaffirm its independence of the United Nations, particularly in view of the tendency sometimes to consider it as an executing agent of the United Nations, a role it consistently disclaimed. It was essential to maintain that distinction at a time when the humanitarian factor was more and more bound up with political, and even

military, factors. Generally speaking, the meetings were extremely useful for the vital coordination between the International Committee and the United Nations.

With regard to the internal functioning of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee itself, measures could certainly be taken to strengthen its decision-making powers, but, since it was not a member of the United Nations system, the International Committee would refrain from stating its views on that subject.

Mr. ELIASSON (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs), referring to the relations between the political, peace-keeping and humanitarian aspects of the United Nations operations, noted that in recent years the Security Council's resolutions on complex emergency situations had often covered those three components. The Secretariat was obliged to comply with those resolutions and some of the points raised in that respect should be referred to the members of the Security Council. It was, nevertheless, clear that the role of the United Nations in the humanitarian field must continue to be based on the principles set forth in the basic texts, such as General Assembly resolution 46/182, with regard to the sovereignty and consent of Governments, or their responsibility to ensure access to populations needing assistance. The concepts of neutrality, impartiality and humanity were also extremely important, particularly as the United Nations was now involved at a stage when conflicts were raging and no longer only when they had been settled. Combining humanitarian and peace-keeping

activities had not yet become a critical problem, and it was of the utmost importance that the United Nations, especially through the Security Council, should proclaim that human beings counted and that human distress was a security matter.

With regard to the establishment of emergency response teams, he pointed out that they were not intended to play an operational role. The despatch of such a team at the initial stage of an emergency would be the exception rather than the rule. In cases where the United Nations system was not present on the ground, as had been the case in Georgia and Tajikistan, it should be represented by a single team. In any event, any such teams would be composed almost exclusively of the representatives of regional institutions and experts.

The "lead agency" concept had been applied even before the adoption of resolution 46/182. Since then, new coordination mechanisms had been introduced: the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, the consolidated appeals and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. It would be henceforth for the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to define the structure required in a given situation, particularly a complex emergency situation. That also implied a division of responsibilities. A particular institution might therefore be entrusted with a key operational role, as was the case of the World Food Programme in Angola, or UNICEF in northern Iraq, the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees in Yugoslavia and elsewhere. According to the traditional formula, the lead agency was assigned its mandate by the Secretary-General and subsequently delegated part of its powers to certain executing agencies. The new procedure would involve acting through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. It would therefore be preferable to use an expression such as "key operational organization" or some such term.

With regard to the location of the Department's main office, whether in New York or Geneva, referred to by the Egyptian and Syrian delegations, he thought it was important that humanitarian affairs should be dealt with at Headquarters not only because of the proximity of the Security Council, but also because of the strong interest that the Secretary-General was taking in those matters. That did not preclude the possible strengthening of the Office in Geneva, where the

majority of the Standing Committee's meetings were held. The importance of humanitarian affairs justified such arrangements.

Mr. JOLLY (United Nations Children's Fund) said that he wished to comment on the continuum from assistance to rehabilitation. Although, in certain Governments, particularly donor Governments, responsibility for development and for assistance lay with different bodies, it was often difficult to make that distinction. In the health sector, for example, some priority assistance activities, such as oral rehydration against diarrhoeic illnesses, and smallpox vaccination, were also development priorities. Measures taken in disaster relief planning could also be incorporated in long-term preventive or other measures.

He recognized that some emergency activities did not sufficiently involve the communities concerned, and, in that regard, capacity-building could be a useful means of simplifying the transition to the development phase.

In Liberia, for example, local communities were being asked to monitor the nutritional situation. Peace-making operations could also serve to make populations aware of potential future problems.

With regard to the problem of mines, consideration had to be given not only to the unspeakable human tragedies and devastation they were causing in some regions of the world, but also to the fact that it was not possible to cultivate the land on which they had been laid. A strategy was therefore clearly necessary to clear them from all accessible regions, perhaps by the year 2000. It was essential that Governments should realize the necessity of calling on the qualified bodies in the system in order to mobilize the necessary resources.

Mr. HJORT (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that he wished to emphasize that the quality of assessments largely determined the response to appeals, which were an important factor in the mobilization of resources; they, in their turn, determined the effectiveness of the activities undertaken. Hence, the importance of early-warning systems. Experience showed that evaluation capacities in the food sector were probably superior to those in any other field.

He also wished to point out that the role of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee depended on the problems involved. The organizations participating in

its work submitted to it their policies, which had subsequently to be given a practical form. That applied to the complex emergency situations: the Standing Committee was the appropriate body to arrive at the operational definition required.

With regard to one of the comments of the delegation of Sudan, he recalled that FAO was mandated to respond to applications for assistance by Governments. In all its activities, in the field of humanitarian operations, relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction or development, FAO acted only at the request of countries.

It was apparent from the various statements which had been made that the concept of coordination had many different aspects since it applied to joint activities with Governments, the evaluation process, the preparation of appeals or projects, the execution phase, financing, operations proper, etc. All those factors were aimed at a single objective, namely, helping member countries to overcome the humanitarian problems confronting them.

Mr. NEBENZIA (Russian Federation) asked whether the humanitarian operation undertaken in Abkhasia had provided any lessons for the emergency humanitarian assistance activities of the United Nations system. Another question was what should be done to ensure the protection of staff engaged in humanitarian assistance operations.

Mr. ELIASSON (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs) said that the operation mentioned by the representative of the Russian Federation highlighted the two main problems encountered by United Nations humanitarian activities: access and resources. In the event of a conflict, it was difficult to reach those needing aid, hence the importance of dealing with the underlying causes of that kind of situation in order to restore peace and security. In that respect, the United Nations was encountering considerable difficulties in other regions of the world, such as Angola and Liberia.

Specifically with regard to resources, the appeals on behalf of Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Kazakhstan, for example, had yielded very meagre results: the pledges amounted to scarcely 8 to 15 per cent of the very modest sums requested. Member States must be asked what role they wished the United Nations

to play in humanitarian operations in the former Soviet Union. It was essential that the situation should be clarified.

It was also important to decide on the modalities of the assistance that Georgia could provide in connection with the situation in Armenia. Because of the fighting and the various problems, the United Nations had not been able to supply Armenia with the oil needed to get through a severe winter which was to have been transported from the Russian Federation across Georgia. That example showed the interdependence of the issues involved and possibly also the need to view the problems of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in a regional context - an idea currently under study by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

With regard to security, the United Nations system was confronted with a serious moral dilemma related, on the one hand, to the compassion aroused by peoples in distress, suffering from famine or other calamities, and, on the other, the need for solidarity with its own officials - those of the United Nations, other agencies and programmes, and NGOs providing operational aid on the ground - the number of casualties among whom was increasing from week to week.

All parties to conflicts in particular should be reminded of their obligation to respect the fundamental principles of humanitarian law. If the current situation were to persist, it might provoke a return to the law of the jungle and a backlash on the part of the donors financing those operations. For its part, the United Nations system must, with a view to improving staff security, take measures relating to recruitment, training, equipment, facilities for medical evacuation, communications and insurance cover, which would be extremely expensive, and financing for them would have to be discussed by the Fifth Committee and ACABQ. In any event, some form or other of initiative in that field would be welcome.

Mrs. KARRE (Observer for Sweden) said that her delegation wished to emphasize once again the importance of a mechanism to enable the various entities in the United Nations system to cooperate with one another in order to overcome the problems they encountered. Whatever form such a concerted effort took, it must be made. The main thing was that the Inter-Agency Standing Committee should function. The question was therefore what action the United Nations bodies intended to take to ensure that the Committee carried out its mission.

Mr. SETH (India) said that he understood that peace-keeping operations were financed from special budgetary resources, and humanitarian activities from voluntary contributions. It would, however, appear from the Secretary-General's report that, in some cases, humanitarian assistance was charged to the resources for peace-keeping operations following Security Council recommendations. It should, therefore, be determined whether such procedures were in conformity with Article 17 of the Charter, which stated that the General Assembly, not the Security Council, should approve the allocation of the resources in question. He would like to know what the Secretary-General's views were on those final aspects: were voluntary contributions really inadequate and had they to be supplemented in effect out of budgetary contributions? That question had, in his opinion, important implications for the concept of "vertical integration" mentioned by several delegations in the course of the discussion.

Mr. HAMBURGER (Observer for the Netherlands) noted that the role of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs appeared to be interpreted in various ways. Should it be confined to complex emergency situations, as Mrs. Bertini and Mrs. Ogata had stated, or should it have a wider role, as the Secretary-General indicated in his report and as General Assembly resolution 46/182 hinted? His delegation hoped that Mr. Eliasson would be able to answer that question on behalf of the United Nations system.

Mr. KAARIA (Observer for Finland) emphasized that the Central Emergency Revolving Fund derived its "revolving" character from resolution 46/182. He wondered to what extent the various agencies had adhered to the principle, also expressed in the resolution, that the resources they borrowed from the Fund should be reimbursed by priority withdrawal from the contributions they received. To what extent had they on their own account or in conjunction with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs made additional efforts to find the necessary financial resources?

Mr. ELIASSON (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs), replying to the representative of India, said that peace-keeping operations were financed out of quotas calculated according to a specific formulation and that humanitarian programmes were financed by voluntary contributions. The problem was that the number and cost of peace-making activities had considerably

increased, and were a burden upon humanitarian operations. Nevertheless, part of the cost of the latter was covered by the "peace-keeping" budget when a Security Council resolution included a humanitarian assistance component. For example, the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs and the related field structure set up by the Security Council were taken over by the peace-keeping operations financing mechanism. That also applied to some aspects of the operations in question which were related to humanitarian activities, such as the demobilization of troops and even de-mining. He hoped that peace-building activities would increasingly make use of teams of engineers, doctors and de-mining specialists, thus including a humanitarian component. The fact remained that, in the case of Somalia, for example, the amount of the appeal, $166 million, was to be derived entirely from voluntary financing. It had to be admitted that problems were being encountered in finding the necessary funds, in view of the fact that costs, particularly for security, were soaring.

In reply to the question asked by the Netherlands delegation, he pointed out that a major part of the work performed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee consisted, at the present stage, in improving the effectiveness of the activities of the system in complex emergency situations. That was an historical trend: the United Nations was now taking action in the midst of civil wars - a difficult and dangerous role, but one that could not be evaded. Nevertheless, the Organization was also taking action on natural disasters, the number of which also seemed to be increasing. It was its duty to meet these challenges by use of the appropriate capacities. He pointed out, in that connection, in response to questions by the representatives of Egypt and Syria among others, that all those capacities were centred in Geneva.

Many other emergency situations of a non-complex nature, were treated differently. There was no occasion to make a consolidated appeal if the traditional procedures were adequate. The concept of the complex emergency situation should therefore be narrowly defined, as the High Commissioner for Refugees had requested: what was meant was an emergency situation in which particularly complex political and peace-making components were affecting the humanitarian operations, and seemed likely to persist for some time. Hence the necessity for specific action.

Mrs. BERTINI (World Food Programme), replying to the representative of Sweden, thought that it would be preferable to wait for the next meeting of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to review current activities.

Mr. HJORT (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that FAO intended to participate in the work of the Inter-Agency Working Group before the Standing Committee took up the questions referred to it. It was necessary to take into account the policy lines emerging from the various governing bodies, whether of non-governmental organizations or specialized agencies, so as to establish a solid basis to enable the Standing Committee to take the appropriate decisions.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.